

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 /059 W
-----104716 312033Z /40

R 311835Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 300
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT CRISIS

SUMMARY: WITH THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT CRISIS FORMALLY ENTERING
ITS THIRD WEEK, THE POSITIONS OF THE MAJOR PARTIES (CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATS AND COMMUNISTS) ARE STILL FAR APART. DESPITE
THE RIGIDITY OF THE STATED DC AND PCI POSITIONS,
THERE IS GUARDED OPTIMISM THAT THE MARGINS FOR NEGOTIATIONS,
HOWEVER SLIGHT, STILL EXIST, AND THAT NEW LEGISLATIVE
ELECTIONS CAN BE AVOIDED. THE DC REACTED TO BERLINGUER'S
TOUGH CENTRAL COMMITTEE SPEECH WITH A RENEWED APPEAL TO
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REACH A SOLUTION ON THE BASIS OF PCI PARTICIPATION IN A
PROGRAM MAJORITY WHICH WOULD HAVE "POLITICAL SIGNI-
FICANCE" IN ITSELF. THIS IS STILL FAR REMOVED FROM
THE "ORGANIC AND EXPLICIT" PCI PARTICIPATION
IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WHICH BERLINGUER ALLUDED
TO LAST WEEK. THE DC DECIDED ON JAN. 31 TO CONVENE
A MEETING OF ITS DIRECTORATE ON FEBRUARY 3 BEFORE

ANDREOTTI EMBARKS ON HIS SECOND ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) HAVE DECIDED TO DELAY PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE ANDREOTTI'S SECOND ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE POLITICAL PARTIES UNTIL AFTER THE PARTY DIRECTORATE MEETS ON FRIDAY, FEB. 3. ANDREOTTI MET WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DC) LEADERS THIS MORNING (JAN. 31). SINCE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES (THE DC AND THE PCI) OVER AN ACCEPTABLE POLITICAL FORMULA REMAIN VERY GREAT, THE DC DIRECTORATE MAY PROVIDE ANDREOTTI WITH GREATER LATITUDE FOR HIS NEGOTIATIONS.

2. THERE WOULD BE NO BASIS FOR SUCH GUARDED OPTIMISM IF THE COMMUNIST POSITION DID NOT LEAVE AN OPENING, HOWEVER SLIGHT, FOR A SOLUTION WHICH PROVIDES SOMETHING LESS THAN FULL PCI PARTICIPATION IN A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY. LAST WEEK'S PCI CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING, WITH ITS REPETITIVE AND ENTHUSIASTIC INSISTANCE ON THE EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT FORMULA, CERTAINLY PROVIDED LITTLE EVIDENCE OF FLEXIBILITY. HOWEVER, THE DC (AND THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES) HAVE CHOSEN TO INTERPRET BERLINGUER'S BACKHANDED REFERENCE TO PARTICIPATION IN A "CON- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRACTUAL, RECOGNIZED AND EXPLICIT MAJORITY" AS AN INDICATION OF THE PCI'S MINIMAL DEMAND. THIS WOULD MEAN FORMAL COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY.

3. THE DC'S REACTION WAS PROVIDED IN AN AUTHORITY ARTICLE WRITTEN BY DC LEADER GUIDO BODRATO (AND REPORTEDLY CLEARED BY MORO AND ZACCAGNINI) IN THE JANUARY 29 EDITION OF IL POPOLO, THE DC DAILY. NOTING THE RIGIDITY OF THE PCI'S INSISTENCE ON A NATIONAL EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT (WHICH THE DC FLATLY REJECTS), BODRATO SAID THE PCI LEADERSHIP HAD BEEN OBLIGED "TO RAISE ITS PRICE" IN ORDER "TO ABSORB THE UNREST IN ITS BASE." THIS REPRESENTED A SET-BACK IN THE PCI'S LONG-TERM STRATEGY OF "INVOLVEMENT WITH DIFFERENT FORCES IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF ITALIAN SOCIETY" (THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE) IN ORDER TO SATISFY AN IMMEDIATE, PRESSING NEED FOR ENHANCED POLITICAL POWER. THIS "DISCOURAGING SIGN," BODRATO SAID, RAISED THE SUSPICION THAT THE PCI IS THINKING IN TERMS OF EARLY ELECTIONS OR, AT LEAST, THAT IT CONSIDERS THEM AN HYPOTHESIS NOT TO BE

DISMISSED.

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4. A SOLUTION, BODRATO SAID, COULD BE FOUND IN A PRO-
GRAM ACCORD WHICH WOULD IMPLY "PRECISE CHOICES" AND
DEMANDS "THE CONSTRUCTIVE GOODWILL" OF THE PARTICIPA-
TING PARTIES. SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD NOT BE "NEUTRAL"
BECAUSE A "BINDING PROGRAM" WHICH REQUIRES "BROAD
SOCIAL SOLIDARITY HAS ITS OWN POLITICAL
SIGNIFICANCE." ON THE OTHER HAND, BODRATO SAID, IF
THE PCI WANTS A "POLITICAL ALLIANCE" RATHER THAN A
"PROGRAM UNDERSTANDING", THEN THE DC WOULD HAVE TO REFUSE
SINCE PARTICIPATION IN A "POLITICAL MAJORITY",
WOULD INVOLVE "A SHIFT TO THE LEFT
IN THE BALANCE OF POWER, AND EVENTUALLY, IN THE FORMA-
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TION OF A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT CHARACTERIZED BY THE HEGEMONY OF THE PCI." COMMENT: AS FORMULATED BY BODRATO, THE DC'S POSITION IN WHICH THE PCI IS LIMITED TO PARTICIPATION IN A "PROGRAM MAJORITY" IS FAR REMOVED FROM THAT "ORGANIC AND EXPLICIT MAJORITY" WHICH THE PCI MAY BE DEMANDING. IN FACT, BODRATO ESSENTIALLY REITERATED THE DC POSITION (ENLARGEMENT AND UPDATING OF THE PROGRAM ACCORD) TO WHICH ANDREOTTI WAS APPARENTLY BOUND IN HIS FIRST ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS. SOME OBSERVERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THERE HAS BEEN SOME MOVEMENT IN THE DC'S POSITION, HOWEVER, AS EVIDENCED BY BODRATO'S REFERENCE TO A NON-NEUTRAL AGREEMENT OF "POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE." THIS IS BEING INTERPRETED BY SOME TO INDICATE THAT IN THE NEXT ROUND ANDREOTTI WILL BE ABLE TO OFFER THE PCI PARTICIPATION IN A "PROGRAM MAJORITY" IN WHICH THE PCI WOULD BE ABLE TO VOTE IN FAVOR RATHER THAN ABSTAIN. EVEN SO, THE MINIMUM POSITION OF THE DC AND PCI ARE CLEARLY FAR APART.

5. COMMENTING ON BODRATO'S IL POPOLO ARTICLE, L'UNITA JANUARY 30 DISMISSED THE DC'S OFFER OF A NON-NEUTRAL UNDERSTANDING AS A "A SMOKE SCREEN" AND AN INDICATION OF THE DC'S "EMBARRASSMENT." THE LAY PARTIES HAVE REITERATED THEIR DESIRE TO AVOID RECOURSE TO EARLY ELECTIONS, BUT HAVE NOT TAKEN ANY NEW INITIATIVES. A HINT THAT THE DC MAY BE WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE LAY PARTIES IN ORDER TO TEMPER THE PCI'S DEMANDS (ON THE THEORY THAT THESE PARTIES HAVE THE GREATEST INTEREST TO AVOID A BREAKDOWN THAT WOULD RESULT IN UNWANTED ELECTIONS) WAS PROVIDED BY ANDREOTTI'S MEETING WITH REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT LA MALFA ON JAN. 30. THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TOOK CARE TO CHARACTERIZE THAT MEETING AS "EXTREMELY CORDIAL" AND "VERY POSITIVE."

6. IN ADDITION TO THE FEB. 3 DC DIRECTORATE MEETING, THERE IS ALSO TALK THAT A DC NATIONAL COUNCIL (THE EQUIVALENT OF A CENTRAL COMMITTEE) MIGHT BE CONVENED AS WELL. IF SO, THIS WOULD BE A SINGULAR EVENT. NATIONAL COUNCILS ARE GENERALLY CONVENED AFTER THE RESOLUTION OF A GOVERNMENT CRISIS. OVER THE LAST THIRTY YEARS, THE DC HAS NEVER HELD A NATIONAL COUNCIL TO DISCUSS OR APPROVE THE PARTY'S POLICY DURING A CRISIS. GARDNER

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